

Introduction

The Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin dynasties represent a period of continued development in ancient Chinese history. Social changes starting from the mid-Tang Dynasty had finally produced positive effects, especially in the territory of Song, and the Liao, Western Xia and Jin societies also demonstrated remarkable progress. Social stratification based on ascription or birth had, during the period of Song, transformed into one based on economic status, and thus the social status of merchants saw a sharp rise. This change in social stratification could find its root in the modification of productive relations within Chinese society. Private ownership of land became more widespread, resulting in more frequent land transactions and transfers of ownership. The state government enacted and enforced laws and regulations to guarantee the private right to land ownership and to transfer such ownership, and took tentative steps towards a unified set of laws related to land purchase, transfer and mortgage. Landlords as a class rent out farmland to peasants and levy land rent from them, thus reducing the physical restraints imposed on peasants and forming a landlord–tenant relationship. All this greatly promoted agricultural production, and provided a solid foundation for the economic and social development of the Song Dynasty. The country made unprecedented advances in terms of agriculture, the handicraft industry, commercial activities and science and technology. During the Song period, China led in both agricultural production technology and annual output of grain, and it was second to none in its output of silver, copper, lead, tin and iron mines. Engraving was widely used to print books, and movable-type printing was invented. Marine compasses and similar devices were used in ocean voyages, and gunpowder, flammable and then explosive, was applied to produce the very first firearms in the world. The invention of the detonator was a precondition for these new weapons, and it also led to the creation of diversified firecrackers and fireworks, a popular source of entertainment. Not only were increasingly more copper and iron coins minted, but the monetary power of silver and gold began to manifest itself, and the world's earliest paper currency was issued during this period. The domestic and international transport systems were considerably enhanced, especially with the

opening of a ‘marine silk road’, which facilitated the economic and cultural exchanges between China and other countries.

In his *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276* Jacques Gernet detailed his research on the social life of Chinese people at the end of the Southern Song Dynasty. He believed that “the history of China, once the mists veiling its contours have dispersed, will be found to consist, not in continuity and immobility, but in a succession of violent shocks, upheavals and breaks in continuity. Thus, from the sixth to the tenth centuries AD, China went through a period from which she emerged completely unrecognizable”. Talking about Lin’an (today’s Hangzhou), the capital of the Southern Song, he wrote that in “about 1275, it was the largest and richest city in the world ... In many spheres, Chinese civilization was at its most brilliant on the eve of the Mongol Conquest”. He pointed out that “a vast fleet of coastwise vessels kept the huge trading centres on the south-east coast in touch with those of the south coast as far as Canton; while the great sea-going junks plied each other, at the monsoons, between China and the main islands of the East Indies, India, the east coast of Africa and the Middle East. In the interior, at the junction of the north–south roadways with the Yang river, permanent markets developed, where the volume of trade far surpassed that of the main commercial centres of Europe at the same epoch”. And in the thirteenth century, China was “striking for its modernism: for its exclusively monetary economy, its paper money, its negotiable instruments, its highly developed enterprises in tea and in salt ... In the spheres of social life, art, amusements, institutions and technology, China was incontestably the most advanced country of the time. She had every right to consider the rest of the world as being peopled by mere barbarians”.^[1]

The authors of this book have never met Professor Gernet, and adopted a widely different approach to historical research from his, but it seems that we have reached surprisingly similar conclusions. We firmly believe that the Song period saw an obvious and constant development in virtually every respect in social life; that is, the social environment, lifestyle and folk customs all experienced constant change and growth and manifested many new characteristics, thus were even more colourful and diverse than those of the previous dynasty. The social life of the Song period reflected the spirits of a new era, as well as people’s philosophical vision, moral principles, ethnic sentiments and aesthetic experience, and it constituted part of a big picture of Chinese society with a grand historical narrative.

Less developed than the Song as they were, the Liao, Western Xia and Jin societies also developed in the vast areas to the north and west of Song, which

^[1] Quoted from Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276*, trans. H.M. Wright (from *La vie quotidienne en Chine à la veille de l’invasion Mongole, 1250–1276*) (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962).

strengthened the integration between the Han and other ethnic groups. In some arenas of social life, those ethnic groups could even rival the Song, not in terms of abundance and diversity, but in that they all had their respective ethnic features, some of which were borrowed and assimilated into the Han culture of the Song, and became an integral part of the folk culture and customs of the Song Dynasty.

Some scholars argue that the rulers of the Song Dynasty had made Confucian and Neo-Confucian principles the moral and political standard of society, so that the social life and folk customs of the Song were in general complicated and conservative, and people of the era were obsessed with ‘recovering antiquity’ and cherished the simplicity. These scholars even propose that the ‘rise and wide acceptance’ of Neo-Confucianism were the logical result of such obsession with ‘recovery of antiquity’, which in turn served as the theoretical foundation of people’s demand for the recovery. The apparel of Song is taken as an example, claiming that at that time people’s apparel was formal and conservative, not as colourful and stylish as in the previous dynasty, but simple, clean and elegant. They believe that this largely resulted from the economic, political, moral and cultural conditions of the society, and that the influence of Neo-Confucianism promoted by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi (朱熹, 1130–1200) could not be overemphasized. It was against this background that the apparel system of the Song Dynasty was modelled on the ancient rites and rituals, and was modified time and again to make it comply with the so-called ‘heavenly principles’ defined by the imperial rulers. Therefore the apparel system of the Song Dynasty was one seeking classical antiquity and featuring rigid hierarchy based on social and economic status, and it was more complicated than that of any previous dynasty. To illustrate their argument, the scholars outlined the modifications of *mian*¹ and formal dress worn by Emperors throughout the Song Dynasty, claiming that each modification of the apparel system involving the *mian* and the formal dress of the Emperor was basically a kind of revival of the apparel system of ancient times. Here the *mian* and formal dress referred to the *gunmian*² worn by Emperors on grand ceremonial occasions, which was – like *jinxianguan*³ – part of the court dress of officials, seldom worn in everyday life.

The advocates of Neo-Confucianism had their own positions on the social life of their times, but their actual influence on the specific domains of social life was subject to debate. Take Zhu Xi, for example: although a master of Neo-Confucianism, he never proposed that the apparel system of ancient times should be applied to the clothing of his time. On the contrary, Zhu Xi held that hats and clothing should be ‘convenient’ and ‘simple’, or they would naturally fall into disuse. He said “I have said that hats and clothing should be convenient in the first place, and even for the ancient people, it was unlikely to define every item of clothing in a strict manner; the apparel

system was modified over time in later ages, making it increasingly more complicated. In order for the apparel system to be practicable, we must consult the ancient apparel system and make it easier by weeding out superfluities. Then it could be embraced by people”.^[2] And he cited the hat worn in mourning as an example, arguing that when observing mourning, one might “add *die* to the four-feet hat” (*die* [经] means the linen band attached to the mourning dress) as well. The four-feet hat was “originally a scarf, with the two front ribbons tied at the back of head and two back ribbons tied inversely at the top, as are today’s hard hat and *futou*.”⁴ Later it has become increasingly heavy and complicated and inconvenient. Then people used a band to tie the hat, which seemed to be a good solution, but I knew it must be discarded, and now it is. Actually, it is enough to go out to see people wearing a purple gown or a thin gown, which costs little. Now how much would it cost to add the hat band and black gown! How come a poor scholar could gain so much money to buy all these? Therefore they must be discarded”.^[3] Thus, we can see that in the first place, Zhu Xi was by no means a rigid proponent of ‘recovery of antiquity’, but proposed that any item of clothing should be convenient and inexpensive, otherwise it could not last long before being discarded.

Second, talking about the origin of apparel of the Song period, Zhu Xi made it clear that “what we people wear nowadays is largely barbarian apparel, such as the collar gown and boots, and thus the headdresses and apparel of the ancient Emperors had all been cast off. The apparel system of the Central Plains had fallen into disorder since the Jin (晋) Dynasty and Sixteen Kingdoms of Five Barbarian Peoples, and the disordered system was then inherited from one dynasty to another. Until the Tang (唐) Dynasty, what people wore was largely barbarian clothing”. The black shoes, for example, “were originally horse-riding shoes, and were later worn by Han people and even became a part of court dress”. Zhu Xi then pointed out that the official dress of Song originated from the Sui (隋) period: “When Emperor Yang of Sui⁵ went on a sightseeing tour, he ordered that all officials shall wear the military dress, with those of the fifth rank and above wearing purple, those of the sixth and seventh rank, crimson, and of the eighth and ninth, green. It became an established system and remained unchanged since then.” During the Tang Dynasty, the military dress of the former dynasty became ‘casual dress’, also called ‘informal dress’, and then in the Song Dynasty it was called the ‘official dress’. Earlier in the Tang Dynasty, the sleeves of the later ‘official dress’ were quite narrow, “all in the

^[2] Li Jingde (黎靖德, ?–c.1270), ed.: ‘Rites, Part 6: On the Capping and Wedding Ceremonies and Funerals – Funerals’ (礼六·冠昏丧·丧), Volume 89, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu* (朱子语类).

^[3] ‘Rites, Part 1: On Amending Books of Rites’ (礼一·论修礼书), Volume 84, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.

barbarian style”, “in the mid-Tang it became wider, and even wider in the late Tang period”, “nowadays it is still worn by people, and the sleeves are even wider than they were in the past”. Zhu Xi indicated that the *guan* worn by officials of the Song Dynasty was actually “*futou*, with a round top and soft feet”, which was part of the court dress of officials during the Tang period. As for the apparel worn by scholar-officials, “in the last year (1125) of the Xuanhe⁶ era under Emperor Huizong’s⁷ reign, scholars-officials “in the capital still wore the informal dress and cap. During the time the court was crossing the Yang river and moving southwards in the warfare, people began to dress in white thin gown. This remained the trend among the literati during two decades of the Shaoxing⁸ period, and later when warfare again became frequent, it was changed into the purple gown; that is, all scholar-officials were dressed in military uniforms”. What about the apparel of the ancient people? Zhu Xi said: “in general, [the ancient people] were dressed like today’s Taoist priests”, and “it is proper for Taoist priests to wear *guan* instead of *jin*, or scarf”. With his detailed research on the evolution of apparel worn by people in the Central Plains, Zhu Xi asserted, quite straightforwardly: “Nowadays it is impossible to recover the clothing of ancient people, and we shall distinguish the clothing of Han people from that of barbarians.”^[4]

Third, what *did* Zhu Xi propose to do with the apparel and apparel system, if he did not suggest ‘recovering antiquity’? Actually, seeing the “disordered apparel system with no clear distinction between different social and political orders”, Zhu Xi proposed to “adjust the apparel system from time to time” if it was impossible to “establish an entirely new system”, believing minor adjustment was better than doing nothing with it. And his suggestions of such adjustments included “the short gowns shall be of the same colour as the official gowns of officials of different ranks; that is, officials who wear purple official gowns shall wear purple short gowns; those who wear crimson or green official gowns shall wear crimson or green short gowns, and for those wearing white official gowns, their short gowns shall also be white; all petty officials shall be dressed in black. All other items of clothing shall be adjusted like this, so as to make a clear distinction between different official ranks”.^[5]

Therefore we can see that Zhu Xi never insisted that the Song Dynasty should adopt the ancient apparel system. Even if a few other advocates of Neo-Confucianism had expressed their support for reviving the ancient clothing, they could not represent all philosophers of this school, and it is even more unreasonable to see it as a notion of Neo-Confucianism.

^[4] ‘Rites, Part 8: Miscellaneous Rites’ (礼八·杂仪), Volume 91, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.

^[5] *Ibid.*

As for their argument that the ‘rise and wide acceptance’ (we think it would be more accurate to change the term ‘wide acceptance’ into ‘wide spreading’) of Neo-Confucianism resulted in an all-round ‘recovery of antiquity’ of the Song Dynasty, that is even more untrue. First, the Neo-Confucianism of Song – here we refer to the term in its narrow sense, the *lixue* (School of Universal Principles) of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi – was not as influential as some scholars might have imagined. As is widely known among scholars, *lixue* put forward by the Cheng brothers was indeed disseminated from 100 years after the establishment of the Northern Song (around 1060) until the period of Emperor Shenzong⁹ and the Yuanyou¹⁰ era (1086–1094) of Emperor Zhezong,¹¹ but it did not make a huge impact on society, and during the Shaosheng¹² era (1094–1098) of Emperor Zhezong, especially during Emperor Huizong’s reign, Cheng Yi (程颐, 1033–1107) was persecuted for being on the ‘Yuanyou coalition register’, and was prohibited by the imperial court from ‘gathering disciples and lecturing’.^[6] And when Wang Anshi’s (王安石, 1021–1086) *xinxue* (New Laws) were widespread, it was given that “no book except Wang Anshi’s *Three New Commentaries* (三经义, on *Rituals of Zhou*, *Book of Documents* and *Book of Poetry*) and *Explanations of Characters* (字说) shall be put on desks”^[7] in schools of all levels. At that time, the Cheng brothers could only lecture on their *lixue* in secret. Zhu Xi was far from constantly successful in his political career. Throughout his 71 years of life, he held office in local and imperial government positions for a total of nine years, with the actual length of time a little more than seven years, and his only court office lasted for 40 days. He was impeached twice during Emperor Xiaozong’s¹³ reign, and during Emperor Ningzong’s¹⁴ reign he was again denounced and driven from office. He died in 1200, still under a cloud that was not lifted until his complete exoneration in the first year (1208) of the Jiading¹⁵ era with Emperor Ningzong’s imperial decree, and the next year the Emperor issued an official document to grant the posthumous title ‘Venerable Gentleman of Erudition’ to recognize Zhu Xi’s intellectual worthiness. However, it was not until Emperor Lizong’s¹⁶ reign in the late Southern Song Dynasty that the *lixue* of the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi was given full attention and became truly influential in intellectual circles. The authors of this book believe that overemphasizing the influence of *lixue* proposed by the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi would certainly lead to conclusions that are utterly unfounded and misleading.

As is discussed above, the advocates of Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty did not insist on recovering the antique system in all respects of

^[6] Li Xinchuan (李心传, 1167–1240): Volume 2, *Record of the Way and Its Fate* (道命录).

^[7] Li Xinchuan: ‘The Gengzi Day of the Third Lunar Month in the Fifth Year of Shaoxing Era’ (绍兴五年三月庚子), Volume 87, *An Annual Record of the Most Important Events since the Jianyan Era* (建炎以来系年要录), hereafter *The Important Records* (要录).

social life. We all know that Zhu Xi had reiterated his view to his disciples: “The rites and music of decorum have been in tatters for more than 2,000 years, which might be a short time seen from a historical perspective, but it is impossible for us to examine those rites and music ... the ancient rites and etiquette were so jumbled and complicated, how can we practise them now! And it shall anyway be adjusted over time”. And then “it might be inappropriate for today’s people to practise ancient rites and etiquette, how about just making some adjustments to the current rites and etiquette so as to make them clear, decent and orderly”.^[8] Obviously Zhu Xi thought the ancient rites and etiquette were so complicated that even the ancient people “might not necessarily follow them in a strict manner”, and it was even more difficult to practise them 2,000 years later in the Song period. Therefore it was better to adjust the rites and etiquette of the times to the needs of “today’s people”. These constitute evidence against the claim that the masters of Neo-Confucianism of the Song Dynasty proposed to recover antiquity in an all-round manner.

This book seeks to incorporate the most accurate and complete historical data to give a well-organized and informative discussion of all aspects of social life of the Song Dynasty, and in doing so we demonstrate that the social life of the Song Dynasty was not so deeply influenced by Neo-Confucian theories, and that the hierarchical system of ancient times was never really followed by people of the Song period. As is detailed above, the apparel of the Song period was subject to constant changes. In choosing their marriage partners, people of Song began to pay more attention to the would-be partner’s potential regarding political career and wealth, which was different from the situation in the period prior to the mid-Tang Dynasty, when people thought highly of family lineage. Marriage and funeral rites and rituals became simpler, more flexible and diversified. The government relaxed its restricting rules on the construction of residential buildings, and there were more indoors appliances coming to be used by ordinary people, with the gradual spreading of straight-chairs and cross-chairs even totally changing people’s longstanding habit of sitting on the ground. There were more options regarding staple food and ingredients compared to the former dynasty, and with a great many innovations in food preparation and culinary skills there emerged two totally different eating and culinary traditions within the territory of Song, the Northern Tradition and the Southern Tradition, while cooked wheaten food was changing gradually from cakes to noodles.

[8] ‘Rites, Part 1: On The Guiding Principles to Examine Rites and Etiquette’ (礼一·论考礼纲领), Volume 81, *Thematic Discourses of Master Zhu*.

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These are but a few examples to show that during the 320 years of the two Song dynasties, people's everyday life was vibrant and colourful and subject to constant changes. And from this historical information, one cannot draw a conclusion that Neo-Confucian masters proposed to recover antique systems in an all-round manner, nor did such a proposal – if there was one – have any actual impact on the social life of that period.

This book is the first monograph on the social life of the Song, Liao, Western Xia and Jin periods, and the research is basically experimental in nature. However, there were a number of relevant researches published before this book, and the authors of this book hereby express their acknowledgements to the following authors and scholars. There are two Chinese editions of Professor Jacques Gernet's *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250–1276*, namely the one translated by Mr Ma Decheng (马德程) and published in 1982 and the one translated by Liu Dong (刘东, 1955–) and published recently (Overseas China Studies Series, Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 1995). Besides, there is *Experiencing the City Life of the Song Dynasty* (宋代城市风情, Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 1987) by Yi Yongwen (伊永文, 1950–); 'The Eastern Capital of Kaifeng in the Song Dynasty' (宋代东京开封府, *Journal of Henan Normal University* [河南师范大学学报], Supplement Issue, 1984) and *Research on the Eastern Capital of the Song Dynasty* (宋代东京研究, Historical Research on Song Series, Henan University Press, 1992) by Zhou Baozhu (周宝珠, 1934–); *The Eastern Capital of the Northern Song Dynasty* (北宋都城东京, Henan People's Publishing House, 1984) by Wu Tao (吴涛); *Hangzhou, Former Capital of China in the Southern Song Dynasty* (南宋故都杭州, Zhongzhou Calligraphy and Painting Studio, 1984) by Lin Zhengqiu (林正秋, 1937–) etc.; and *Hangzhou, the Capital of the Southern Song Dynasty* (南宋京城杭州, 1985) compiled and published by the Office of Hangzhou Municipal Committee of CPPCC. On marriage and wedding customs of the Song Dynasty, there is *Research on the Marriage Customs of the Song Dynasty* (宋代婚俗研究, Taipei: Hsin Wen-feng Press, 1988) by Peng Liyun (彭利芸) and *Marriage and Society (Song)* (婚姻与社会 (宋代), Sichuan People's Publishing House, 1989) by Zhang Bangwei (张邦炜, 1940–). On folk customs of the Jin Dynasty, there is *The Social Life of the Jin Dynasty* (金代的社会生活, Chinese Folk Customs Series, Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 1988) by Song Dejin (宋德金, 1937–). And a number of articles on the social life of this period have been published in such journals as *Chinese Literature and History* (文史知识), *Literature and History* (文史), *Zhejiang Academic Journal* (浙江学刊), *Chinese Cuisine*

(中国烹饪), *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Social Sciences)* (上海师范大学学报 [社科版]) and *Historical Monthly* (历史月刊, Taipei). Then there were a number of new researches published before the second edition of this book went to print, which are not mentioned individually in order not to make the list too long. Some additions and revisions have been made in the second edition, but we have tried not to make major changes to the book.